

Message Text

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ACTION OES-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 AID-05 CEQ-01 CIAE-00
SOE-02 COME-00 DODE-00 EB-08 EPA-01 INR-10 L-03
NSF-01 NSC-05 NSAE-00 PM-05 ICA-11 SS-15 SP-02
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R 071800Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9816
INFO ALL EC CAPITALS
USMISSION GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 11638

USEEC ALSO FOR EMBASSY

GENEVA PASS LOS DELEGATION

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PLOS SENV EWWT ENRG FR UK XG XT
SUBJECT: AMOCO CADIZ OIL SPILL - RESIDUAL PROBLEMS

REF: PARIS 10877

1. SUMMARY. REFTEL CONTAINED OUR GENERAL IMPRESSIONS
OF ATMOSPHERE FOLLOWING AMOCO CADIZ DISASTER. HERewith
ARE COMMENTS ON THREE SPECIFIC PROBLEMS WHICH MAY ARISE
FROM THIS OIL SPILL: (1) AMOCO'S IMAGE; (2) THE QUEST-
TION OF CENTRAL AUTHORITY FOR THE CLEANUP; (3) THE
LARGE NUMBER OF USG AGENCIES INVOLVED. END SUMMARY.

2. FACTS LEADING TO THE WRECK OF THE AMOCO CADIZ ARE
UNDER JUDICIAL INQUIRY, AND PARTIES INVOLVED ARE THUS
PLAYING CARDS CLOSE TO THEIR VESTS. HOWEVER, SEVERAL
FRENCH LEADERS, INCLUDING THE PRIME MINISTER, HAVE
PUBLICLY BLAMED THE VESSEL'S CAPTAIN FOR FAILING TO
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REPORT ITS DISTRESS ON TIME. ACCUSATIONS HAVE ALSO
BEEN MADE--AND DENIED--THAT RESCUE OPERATIONS WERE
DELAYED THROUGH PRICE HAGGLING BETWEEN THE SHP AND/OR
AMOCO HEADQUARTERS IN CHICAGO ON THE ONE HAND, AND
THE TUG AND/OR ITS HOME OFFICE IN GERMANY ON THE OTHER.
SEVERAL FRENCH OFFICIALS, NOTABLY MARC BECAM,
STATE SECRETARY FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN THE INTERIOR

MINISTRY CHARGED WITH COORDINATING CLEAN-UP EFFORTS, HAVE ALSO EMPHASIZED SHORTCOMINGS OF FLAG-OF-CONVENIENCE VESSELS, IMPLYING THAT THEY ARE SUBSTANDARD. WE NOTE AN INCREASING PUBLIC FEELING THAT RELATIVELY UNKNOWN (IN EUROPE) TANKER OPERATORS LIKE AMOCO ARE TOO PROFIT MOTIVATED AND PRONE TO TAKE UNJUSTIFIED SAFETY SHORTCUTS. NEVERTHELESS, U.S. PETROLEUM COMPANIES HAVE NOT YET BEEN SINGLED OUT FOR BLAME. CONVERSELY, SHELL IS A HOUSEHOLD WORK IN FRANCE, AND AS A RESULT IT HAS HAD TO COPE WITH A NATIONWIDE CONSUMER BOYCOTT AGAINST ITS PRODUCTS. THIS BOYCOTT WAS SHORT-LIVED, HOWEVER, SINCE A COURT EARLIER THIS WEEK RULED IT ILLEGAL AND ORDERED ITS ORGANIZERS TO PAY SHELL 10,000 FRANCS IN DAMAGES, WHICH THE COMPANY HAS DONATED TO VICTIMS OF THE DISASTER. AS THE JUDICIAL INQUIRY PROCEEDS, THE BURDEN OF CORPORATE BLAME COULD THUS BE SHIFTED MORE ON THE AMOCO'S SHOULDERS.

3. OVERALL GOF PLANS TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM STILL SEEM TO US TO LACK FIRM CENTRAL AUTHORITY. BECAM CONTINUES TO REITERATE THAT THE P.M. HAS ASSIGNED TO HIM THIS CENTRAL ROLE. WHILE HIS EFFORTS CONCENTRATE ON INFORMING THE PEOPLE OF BRITTANY ALL THAT IS BEING DONE FOR THEM, MOST ACTUAL BEACH CLEAN-UP OPERATIONS ARE BEING RUN ON AN AD HOC LOCAL BASIS. THE NAVY'S WORK AT SEA CONTINUES TO BE LARGELY INDEPENDENT OF CONFIDENTIAL

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THESE CIVILIAN EFFORTS.

4. THERE ARE CURRENTLY TEAMS FROM NOAA, EPA, AND THE U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCY ON SITE IN BREST TO MAKE VARIOUS STUDIES OF POLLUTION EFFECTS. THE UK, BELGIUM, NETHERLANDS AND OTHER COUNTRIES ALSO HAVE OR WILL BE SENDING GROUPS TO STUDY THE SPILL. WE HAVE EVERY REASON TO BELIEVE THAT THEIR FRENCH COUNTERPARTS WELCOME THIS OPPORTUNITY TO COLLABORATE WITH THEM. NEVERTHELESS, GOF ABILITY TO RECEIVE LARGE NUMBERS OF FOREIGN SCIENTISTS, TECHNICIANS, AND RESEARCHERS AT BREST AND NEARBY SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTIONS WILL PROBABLY REMAIN LIMITED. TO THE EXTENT THAT THE DEPARTMENT CAN DO SO, PROVIDING THE EMBASSY WITH ADVANCE NOTICE OF OFFICIAL U.S. VISITORS TO THE AREA WOULD BE VERY HELPFUL. HARTMAN

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Message Attributes

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